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**Sen. Stamas announces Tawas volunteer group selected
as 2004 Governor's Service Award finalist**

LANSING – State Sen. Tony Stamas, R-Midland, announced today that the St. Joseph Health System Volunteer's Courtesy Coach Program of Tawas City has been selected as a finalist for the 2004 Governor's Service Award.

The program was selected from more than 150 individuals, businesses and nonprofit organizations from across the state that were nominated for the awards.

“Volunteers do so much for our communities and it's important that we take the time to acknowledge their hard work and show our appreciation,” Stamas said. “The Courtesy Coach Program at St. Joseph Health System has made a significant impact in the lives of numerous northeast Michigan residents. I think that this volunteer organization is clearly deserving of recognition.”

The St. Joseph Health program of Tawas City is devoted to providing safe, reliable transportation to health care services for aging, handicapped and low-income community members. Last year, volunteers contributed more than 2,400 hours of service and served more than 1,000 community members. Volunteers have put systems in place to provide high-level maintenance and even wash and clean the van themselves.

A single van covers five rural and sparsely populated counties in northeast Michigan and travels an average of 22,000 miles per year. In 2002, volunteers raised \$50,000 to replace a well-used van that had been in service since the program's inception in 1997. The new five-passenger van is handicapped accessible and equipped with a wheelchair lift.

The award honors dedicated citizens and organizations who give of themselves through volunteer service. After a rigorous peer review by individuals representing nonprofit, volunteer, business and education organizations, 30 finalists were selected in six award categories.

To purchase tickets to attend the event or for more information about the Governor's Service Awards, visit www.michigan.gov/mcsc or call (517) 373-4200.

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